Vendettas of Italian Quarter Are Affairs of Mystery

Sentences of Death Are Imposed and Carried Out, With the Authorities Generally Helpless

THREE men whose names are known to the police are walking the streets of this city under sentence of death imposed by an Italian organization of nether New York. Five others upon whom sentence was passed at the same time have been shot, and four of them are dead. In police phraseology, it is a vendetta.

Loosely, the word is used to describe a killing, the victim of which has been marked for death by a secret organization, not in passion or with the idea of robbery, but simply because he is in the way. This loose use of the word may be excused on the ground that among the clannish Italians such a murder, more often than not, is the genesis of a vendetta.

Hard to Distinguish

As a matter of fact, also, both the true vendetta murder—which is, strictly speaking, the avenging of a murder by a kinsman of the deceased—and the execution of a death sentence imposed by a clique are accomplished with such mysterious swiftness that the police seldom can distinguish between them. It is seldom that the doom of the condemned men becomes known before sentence has been carried out upon all of them.

Under ordinary circumstances the victim is shot from ambush and lies dead in the street or by a window of his home when the police arrive. If he was killed by a bullet that came through the window his relatives protest that he had no enemies and never had received a threat. If he was shot in the street, not a person can be found who will admit seeing the bushwhacker.

There is nothing to show why he was murdered. It may be months before the police discover that he was a relative of a murderer or that he was an obstacle to the ambitions of an underworld clique. Generally such information comes to light only when another murder has been committed and the significance of the sequence appears.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when an Italian is found dead from a bullet or knife wound, with his possessions intact, the police say "vendetta." If he was not killed in revenge it is reasonable to expect that some one else will be shortly.

One Executioner Blundered

Only in rare instances do the police get such information as they have obtained in the case of the eight men condemned to death, five of whom have been shot. Probably they would not have obtained it in this case had not the executioner bungled in the case of the fifth victim, Angelo Lagaputo.

With the fear of death upon him in Fordham Hospital, Lagaputo let slip some information which enabled the police to connect the attack upon him with the killing of Giovanni Loiachimo, Salvatore Maro, Angelo Patricola and Giuseppe Granatello. With this information in their possession the detectives of the Italian squad were able to say, with certainty of the truth of the statement, that three associates of the five also were doomed.

Although neither the wounded man nor the three who had escaped the executioner would admit the truth of the deduction, their attitude confirmed the detectives in their belief. Some time the men of the Italian squad will pick up a bit of information which will point to the clique of gamblers who decided that the eight men must be put out of the way. It is 10 to 1, however, that by that time the three who now walk the streets under suspended sentence will have met their fate.

That is the way the problems of the Italian squad pile up. Although the identification of a man whose life has been blown out with a shotgun charge may throw light upon a murder of six months ago, it presents a new riddle without definitely solving the old one.

Recognize No Law

The roots of most of the so-called vendetta killings are to be found in the underworld of Little Italy, which recognizes no laws against gambling, drug trafficking or liquor selling. A few years ago the "boss men" of this underworld gained their livelihood—and it was a generous one—from control of gambling, the traffic in drugs or by levying tribute on small tenements in certain districts.

Sometimes they might turn their talents to blackmail, kidnapping or Black Hand terrorism, but even then they generally selected as the victim a man who threatened their power or defied it. Recently, however, the traffic in liquor has surpassed all other sources of gain in subsurface Little Italy.

Prohibition is incomprehensible to the Italian of New York. In his opinion a man can no more be prevented by law from drinking than he can from eating, and he regards water as a liquid to be used only for cleansing purposes. The "boss men" of his underworld do not regard the prohibition law as a joke, however. They regard it as a godsend.

Never before since the strings of red peppers and garlic first blossomed on the East Side has there been such profit to be taken. The most luxurious and expensive of motor cars are parked nowadays in front of the dingy looking tenements of Mott Street, Mulberry and Elizabeth and in the early 100's of the East Side of Harlem.

Where the field is rich the struggle is keenest, and never before since those same strings of red peppers and garlic first blossomed on the East Side has there been such an epidemic of killings. Rapacity and suspicion are abroad in Little Italy's underworld. The illicit traffic in liquor is still so new that probably no master has arisen powerful enough to assume complete control of it in any district.

There is a constant striving among the "boss men," constant jealousy, constant suspicion and constant murder.

Alberto Alteria, who was said to be one of the most promising aspirants to the bootleg throne of Little Italy, left his wife and baby at their home in East Thirty-second Street February 10, saying that he had an appointment near Police Headquarters. It is only a block or so from headquarters to the section of the city known as the whisky curb market.

It is reported that Alteria actually went to Headquarters and had a quarrelsome interview with a detective there. At any rate he was within 100 feet of the building when he was shot down at noon, receiving a wound from which he died later in Gouverneur Hospital. Steamship passage to Italy and bankbooks showing deposits of almost $400,000 were found in his pockets.

Four Men Shot

In the evening of March 1 four men were shot, none of whom would give the least information concerning the incident, although it was obvious that each pair had engaged in a duel.

One of them, so riddled with bullets that he could not even give his name, was found beside the curb at Second Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street. His right hand gripped a revolver. Thirty or forty yards away a man sat in the gutter, his head clasped in his hands. He was Michael Ciccitocco, of 318 East Thirty-eighth Street. A good part of his right ear had been torn away by a bullet. He insisted that he didn't know how it had happened and that he never laid eyes on the other wounded man before.

That same evening Rocco Franko, of 46 Pitt Street, staggered out of the doorway of the house in which he lived and clung weakly to a lamp post. There was a pistol in his hand and a wound in his breast. The patrolman who discovered him entered the house and found Charles Vito, of 2589 Amsterdam Avenue, rocking in agony on the stairs with a pistol in his hand. His right eye had been shot out.

Franko died from his wound without telling how he got it and his funeral was the most gorgeous spectacle the East Side has seen for many a day. The cost of its magnificence was discussed freely, and it was said that the bronze coffin in which the body was borne to the church cost $4,000, that $2,000 was spent for flowers and $2,000 more for carriages. Six prancing black horses, plumed and caparisoned, drew the hearse and two bands escorted the funeral procession.

If Charles Vito recovers from his wound and later dies a violent death, the police may pick up some information which will throw light on the reasons for the death of Franko, and then they may have to wait for another killing before they can hazard a likely guess as to why Vito died. The death of Joseph Di Marco and Charles Lombardi, in 1916, was not explained until more than a year later.

Di Marco, a potent figure in the Little Italy of Harlem, was found dead on July 20, seated at a long table in a barely furnished room at 54 James Street. Beside him was seated Lombardi, known as "Nine-Fingered Charley," who, the police surmised from their constant association, had been Di Marco's bodyguard. "Nine-Fingered Charley" was dead, too. Ten bullets had riddled his body. Only one had been necessary for Di Marco.

Ten hats hung in a row on the hooks near the door. Ten chairs, scattered and upset, testified further to the haste with which their occupants had departed from the dingy tenement room. A dollar bill lay under a square of gray cloth on the long table at which the dead men sat. No one in the neighborhood would admit seeing any person enter the room or leave it.

Not a Gambling Fight

The dollar bill made it look like a fight between gamblers. But neither of the dead men had drawn a weapon. Nor was there any evidence of a struggle. They sat as they had sat in life, save that Di Marco's head had fallen forward on the table and "Nine-Fingered Charley" was braced stiffly against the back of his chair, as if impelled by the impact of the ten bullets. Neither had so much as pushed his chair back from the table.

Gamblers' fights do not leave the victims so composed. Words precede shots and the doomed man has a chance to flee to protect himself. Not so Di Marco and "Nine-Fingered Charley." In spite of the evidence of the dollar bill the police were convinced that the ten men who met them there had come there to kill them and had killed without warning.

This belief was strengthened by information which reached them which concerned the power which Di Marco wielded among his countrymen in Harlem. Giosue Gallucci, longtime chief of that district, had met the end which was the portion of such potentates not long before, and the police guess was that Di Marco had aspired to his throne and been put out of the way by a rival aspirant, the dollar bill being left on the table merely as a blind. They waited for another death to confirm them in this belief.

They had not long to wait, but it was a death which threw no light on the mystery; it was that of Di Marco's brother, Salvatore. Instead of solving the riddle it complicated it. The murder of Salvatore merely proved that the enemies of the Di Marcos were crafty and ruthless.

After weeks of persuasion Salvatore Di Marco had agreed to help the law take vengeance on his brother's murderers. For weeks he had refused steadfastly to admit that he had any knowledge which would help the authorities. On October 12, 1916, however, he promised Detective Frederick Franklin that he would meet him the following day in a coffee house in Harlem and tell him what he knew.

He did not keep the appointment. Early in the morning of October 13 the body of Salvatore was found in a vacant lot in Astoria. His head had been crushed with an axe, and a keen knife or razor had almost severed his head from his body. Louis Di Marco, another brother, who never had offered to play the part of informer, was killed when he visited an Italian section in Brooklyn, presumably on an errand of vengeance.

All hope of solving the mystery of the ten hats in the James Street tenement vanished. The Di Marco family of fighting age was extinct.

Ralph the Barber

And then, in a manner that was astounding to those familiar with the taciturnity of the denizens of the Italian underworld, it was solved, and with it more than a score of other murders. A hireling murderer, a man who killed for a living and made $15 a week at it, betrayed the pompous tyrants who had overawed the Little Italies of two boroughs with their killers.

He was Ralph Daniello, known also and more widely as "Ralph the Barber," and he betrayed the master murderers, the padrones, or boss men, because they hadn't kept their promise to send his wife and children back to Italy while he eloped to Nevada with a younger woman. That was in November, 1917.

To Ralph the Barber the failure to keep this promise was of sinister significance. He had held his job long enough to know what happened to the workman who was out of favor. A milkman generally found him in an alley or hallway in the dawn, with his throat cut, with a bullet hole in his forehead or with the grewsome wound which a sawed-off shotgun makes in his chest.

So when Ralph the Barber was arrested in Reno on complaint of the mother of the girl with whom he had eloped he decided that there never would be a better—if there even were to be another—chance to tell the secrets of the padrones. He was securely locked up; iron bars and steel doors guarded him from the $20-a-week killers; he never had felt so safe in his life before; he hoped he could stay in prison for the rest of his days.

Ralph the Barber lost no time in intimating to the Nevada authorities that he would give some interesting information if he was sent to New York—under strong guard. He was sent, and spent several days telling his story to the District Attorneys of this county and of Kings, and several weeks relating it under oath before grand juries and in courts.

He told of twenty-three murders of which he had personal knowledge and in many of which he had taken an active part. He told of three gangs or "trusts" which controlled all the big Italian colonies of the city. One of them was the Mulberry Street or downtown gang, one was the Harlem gang and the third was the Navy Street or Brooklyn gang.

Killers at $15 a Week

Three padrones ruled the Harlem gang, three ruled the Mulberry Street gang and four ruled the Navy Street gang. Ralph the Barber told their names. These ten men had forty or fifty killers, to whom they paid $15 or $20 a week. Ralph the Barber told the names of those he knew to be killers. He told the names of the men he knew they had killed.

Among these names were those of Joseph Di Marco and his two brothers, of "Nine-Fingered Charley" and of Giosue Gallucci and his son Lucca. They and the nineteen others of whom Ralph the Barber told had been condemned to death. They had offended the padrones.

The ten padrones who administered the high justice, but never saw blood themselves, were men of prominence and wealth in the Italian colonies. Most of them conducted legitimate businesses as importers or wholesalers, but the real source of their wealth was blackmail.

Among them they levied on every Italian gambler in the city. No man dared open a gambling house in Harlem, downtown or in Brooklyn until he had seen the representative of one of the padrones in whose district he intended to operate and reached an understanding with him as to the percentage to be paid for the privilege.

If one dared to rebel he met the fate which Di Marco and "Nine-Fingered Charley" met at that long table in the James Street tenement. If his surviving relatives sought revenge they were found as Salvatore Di Marco was found in the weed-grown lot in Astoria.

The white slave traffic paid tribute also. So did the traffic in illicit drugs, and a special tariff was levied on artichokes, amounting to $25 for every wagonload taken by an Italian from any of the big markets. Monopolies in certain districts in olive oil, ice, coal and wood and other commodities were peddled by the agents of the padrones, and once a monopoly was granted woe to the rival who invaded the district.

The padrones were strict in collecting their dues, but they were equally zealous in protecting those who paid promptly. Their power was absolute.

If it was challenged in any quarter a killer would be summoned to headquarters, where revolvers and other weapons were kept. A suitable weapon and precise instructions would be given him, and the offender paid the utmost penalty for his rashness.

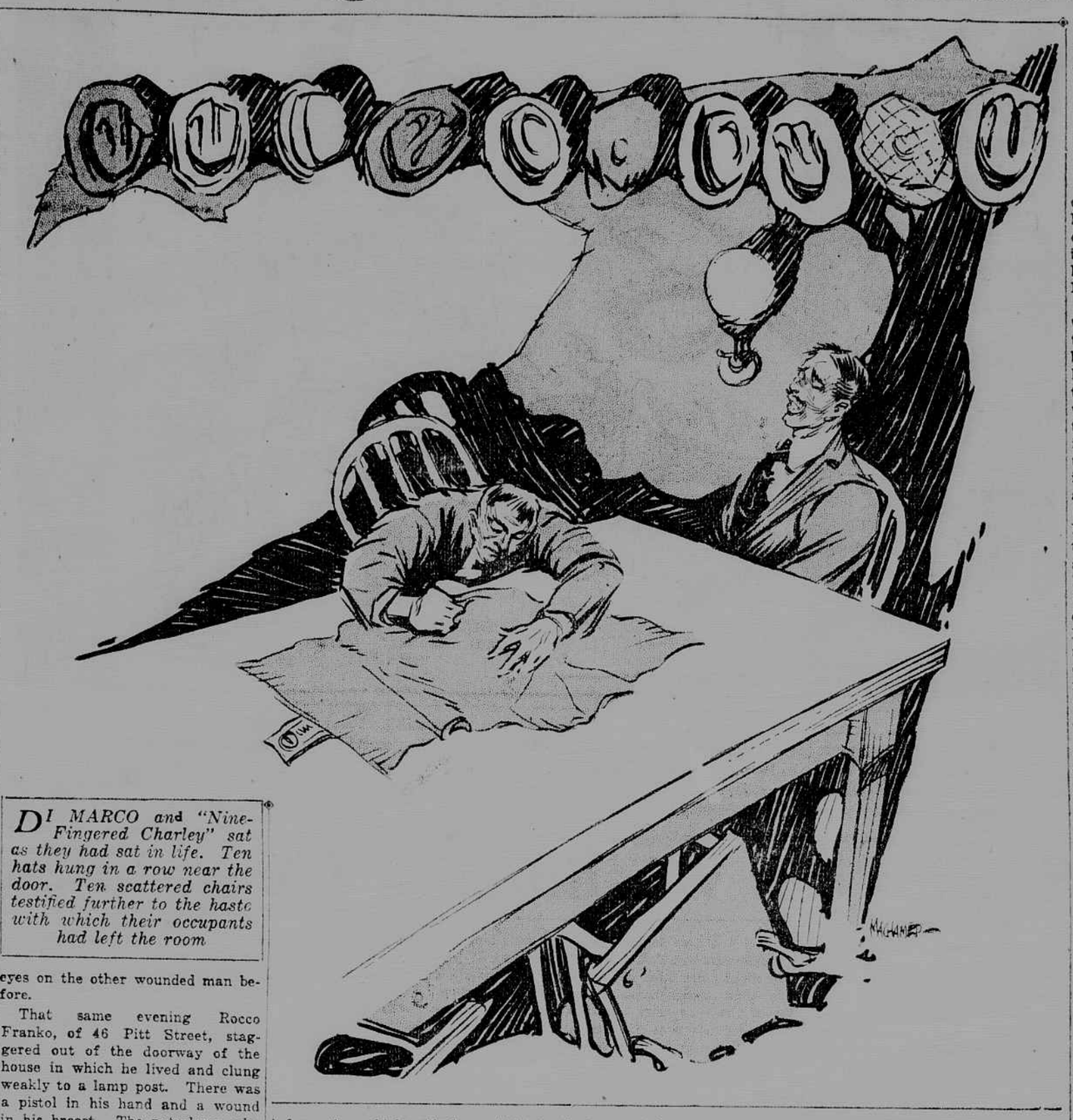
Slayers Went Free

Seventeen indictments for murder were found in this county as a result of the testimony of Ralph the Barber, and several men were brought to trial. Conviction of the defendants was impossible in many cases, however, because of the fact that the principal witness was an accomplice of the defendant and the obstinate silence of all having innocent knowledge of the crime made it impossible to corroborate his testimony.

Because of this difficulty and because of the fact that several of those named by Ralph the Barber fled the country, his whole hideous story never has been made public and perhaps never will. It has been filed away and the mere knowledge that it was in the possession of the authorities is believed to have done much to break the power of the blackmail monarchs of Little Italy.

But with prohibition came bootlegging, bringing possibilities far beyond the most avaricious dreams of the ten padrones who ruled two boroughs. If the ten thrones are still vacant there is every reason to suspect, from the frequency of vendetta murders in Harlem, downtown and in Brooklyn, that there is no lack of aspirants for them.

In all police history there has been but one Ralph the Barber. The solution of these new killings demands another.



DI MARCO and "Nine-Fingered Charley" sat as they had sat in life. Ten hats hung in a row near the door. Ten scattered chairs testified further to the haste with which their occupants had left the room

Real Story of Empress Eugenie Blames Her for War

EUGENIE DE MONTIJO, last Empress of the French, died on July 11, 1920, in her ninety-fifth year. For half a century she had lived in approximate exile on British shores, mourning the loss of her husband, Napoleon III, and her son, the Prince Imperial, killed in 1879 while serving with English troops in the Zululand.

There was too much tragedy to her life to encourage many biographers to tell the whole truth about her association with the Second Empire. It would have been unjust persecution.

With her death, a halo still hung about the affairs of Eugénie. Memoirs and anecdotes, long held in waiting, were released for publication, but they approached the truth warily. The pathetic figure of the little old lady was still too fresh a memory. Legend and romance continued to serve, picturing the forlorn widow in her unhappiness and forgetting the Empress who brought her country so near to ruin.

Eventually the true story of the Empress Eugénie had to come, and it seems entirely appropriate that it should come from a Frenchman, the Count de Soissons. The count calls his book just that, The True Story of the Empress Eugénie (John Lane Company).

There is no hazy mist of sentiment before the count's eyes as he gazes back at the Second Empire, nor are his findings overshadowed by any tragic spectacle of the Empress in her dotage. He plunges into the facts of the case with an enthusiasm that cannot be mistaken or overlooked. He enjoys his task, frankly and in the open.

Was an Andalusian

Officially, Eugénie de Montijo was the daughter of the Count de Montijo, a grandee of Spain, and Maria-Manuela Kirkpatrick of Closeburn. Her birth is given as May 5, 1826, in Granada, the capital of Andalusia.

These statistics have often been questioned. Even the Count de Soissons, in the midst of reciting the true story, pauses to apologize for being unable to add anything but more mystery to the cause. He gives a report of an old lawsuit which seems to show that the Count de Montijo died three years before the birth of Eugénie, but he cannot trace her parents definitely. He leaves the matter for future speculation.

Eugénie was brought up as the daughter of the Countess de Montijo, and it was the same countess who engineered the meeting that brought about the union with Napoleon III.

Eugénie seems to have had a precocious career in Spain at the court of Queen Isabella. Count de Soissons speaks of her as being "coquettish, eccentric, vain and restless." He writes further:

"She was often to be seen galloping through the streets of Madrid, smoking a cigarette, or even a cigar. Dressed in fancy costumes of her own invention, she was constantly at theaters and bullfights, flirting with the toreadors, whom she would present with red caps embroidered with gold. The shy and retiring girl changed into a bewitching beauty, and Madrid's most eligible suitors raved about her."

When she was still young her mother carried her off to the gay life of the various watering resorts on the Continent. They spent much time in Paris and occasionally visited England.

"By her beauty, her relentless coquetry and splendid *toilettes*," writes the count, "Eugénie created more admirers whenever she appeared, and several *grands seigneurs* asked for her hand, but she kept her heart and senses under control, and, having an intuition that she would find some one still better, she preferred to wait.

Napoleon's Courtship

"Certainly she provoked most of the slander which surrounded her name, but there is nothing to show that her conduct was anything more than extravagant and imprudent."

Louis Napoleon was proclaimed President of the French Republic on December 20, 1848. Four years later he was elected President for another ten years, and on December 2 of the same year became Emperor after 8,000,000 Frenchmen recorded their wish for the restoration of the dynasty.

Securely established as Emperor, Napoleon began his serious courtship of Eugénie. With Eugénie his guest at Compiègne he laid violent siege to her heart.

Apparently the affair occasioned much talk among the Emperor's friends and supporters, and there is considerable evidence that there were many who were displeased. They were anxious for him to strengthen his throne by an alliance with a princess of royal blood.

On January 22, 1853, Napoleon announced his approaching marriage before the Council of State, the Senate and the Legislative Assembly. He went on to explain that he was marrying for love, that he was placing independence, the dictates of the heart and the welfare of family above dynastic prejudices and ambitious aspirations.

Yet Count de Soissons points out that Napoleon up until immediately before his marriage with Eugénie was still trying for a princess of royal blood and that his proposal was not prompted solely by love, but a great deal by pique. The imperial marriage was celebrated on January 31, 1853, with a civil ceremony the night before.

The biographer represents Napoleon's court as a ludicrous spectacle as directed by the new Empress. Its keynote was vulgarity, he says, peopled by a group of merrymakers that had no thought of dignity or correctness. The aristocratic elements of France avoided the official entertainments and shunned the Empress. He accounts for her lack of success by emphasizing her "defective education, and especially the nomadic life which she had led before her marriage."

The Count de Soissons writes:

"The Empress of the French was very beautiful, but notwithstanding the defamatory pamphlets published in Germany there is not a shadow of truth in the allegations made against her. It is true that she was coquettish, especially with her old friends, making one day promises which she withdrew the next, but that was all."

However charitable Count de Soissons may be in his analysis of Eugénie's private morals, he blames her directly for the events which destroyed the empire and nearly annihilated France.

"Continual scenes with the Empress, her bitter reproaches, her fits of anger lasting several days, rancors which persisted for several months, blunted Napoleon's strength of character. Eugénie's influence became more and more preponderant. Napoleon, feeble and sick, was to be a plaything in her hands; she knew his weak points; he was afraid of scenes and preferred to give in.'

The Empress was initiated into all state affairs, all projects were submitted to her, and her political influence became very great. She was said to play toward the Emperor very much the same role that Mme. du Barry had played toward Louis XV.

It was the Empress who led France to back Maximilian in the venture that became the Mexican tragedy. It was again the Empress who estranged Austria from France, and eventually she led France into the Franco-Prussian War.

Count de Soissons quotes General du Barrail on the subject:

"I am obliged to recognize that the Empress was, if not the only author, at least the principal author, of the war of 1870. She urged the war, and her influence was considerable. Her influence over the Emperor was practically unlimited."

Napoleon's physical condition unfitted him for active service in the field. Urged on by Eugénie, he took command of the army and his wife was given the regency. A few weeks later, on the afternoon of September 3, the fateful telegram was delivered at the Tuileries:

"The army is defeated. I am a prisoner. NAPOLEON."

After her flight to England, where she settled at Chislehurst, she became a shrewd business woman and accumulated considerable property. She did many things which did not please the Count de Soissons.

"Every time she had a chance," he writes, "she would visit Queen Victoria, who remained steadfast toward the dethroned Empress."

In conclusion the biographer asks whether his pages have dealt too severely with the Empress Eugénie. "They have, at all events, tried to do justice," he insists, "and to give some idea of that life which has glided past like a dream, a starry dream that changed into a horrible nightmare."

Literary Centenaries of 1921

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE is particularly rich in literary centenaries says a correspondent in The Manchester Guardian. Flaubert and Dostoïevsky represent France and Russia, respectively, in fiction, and Britain has Wilkie Collins, Whyte Melville and, if one may venture to add her name to such an illustrious company, Miss Charlotte Maria Tucker, dear to some of us in childhood days as A. L. O. E.

In poetry the great name of Dante is supreme; it will be the 600th anniversary of his death in September. This year also sees the birth centenary of Baudelaire, while we have such a variety of poets as Dora Greenwell, Frederick Locker-Lampson and John Skinner, the last named having been born 200 years ago and called by Burns the writer of the "best Scottish song ever Scotland saw."

Sir Samuel Baker, Heinrich Barth and Sir Richard Burton make a notable trilogy of travelers, and among painters there are Noel Paton and Ford Madox Brown. Of religious writers, preachers, teachers and church dignitaries there are George Dawson, Archbishop Temple, Dean Bradley (who propped the walls of Westminster Abbey for posterity), and Henri Frédéric Amiel. And in what other company shall one include Marcus Aurelius, said to have been born in 121 A. D., and Anne Askew, born in 1521, and martyred twenty-five years later?

Journalism is represented by Hepworth Dixon and J. M. F. Ludlow, the latter being the propagandist through the press of Christian Socialism. Golfers will be glad to revive the memory of Tom Morris and educationists that of Edward Thring, while the fighting services are represented by Lord Alcester.